

Midpoint in Mexico

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It's hard to believe that I am already approaching the midpoint of my internship with SOMA. In agreement with the sentiments of my fellow bloggers, it feels like I arrived just a week ago. Mostly, I think the time has passed so quickly because my days have been so filled with new and diverse experiences. I've been so busy that often I can't even remember what I had for dinner the night before. Usually the answer is tacos. Lots and lots of delicious tacos.

For those who might not remember or have known in the first place, this summer I am interning with an art collective called SOMA in Mexico City. Specifically, I am helping run SOMA's summer art residency program. This summer there are thirty international artists participating in the program. Each week a different visiting artist takes charge of the program. Sometimes the visiting artist will lecture, sometimes he (I just automatically wrote "or she," before realizing that all of the visiting artists have been men. Hmmm.) will lead a participatory workshop, and sometimes he will take the participants on some form of artistic excursion in the city. Each week at SOMA I have had a different daily schedule. Because of the changing landscape of the program's format and the constant adaption to a new leader, my internship duties have been diverse and in direct response to the demands of the day. That being said, a few of my daily duties remain consistent, and in general my responsibilities have picked up pace. Some consistent things I do are work on the organization's archives, welcome and provide support and answers to the visiting artists, and facilitate the weekly individual critiques.

One of my learning objectives at the onset of my internship was to get a handle on how a non-profit organization functions. The answer to this, I have found, is that it functions on a day-to-day basis. That is to say that, in correspondence with my internship responsibilities, a non-profit works from a base but responds to the challenges of each day as it comes. Working in such a spontaneous and reactionary manner has helped develop and shed light on my other learning objectives. For example, another one of my learning objectives was to learn about the feasibility and strategy of having a creative career in the modern work force. SOMA as an organization has shown me many ways in which a person, or group of people, can dedicate themselves to creative tasks and make a living at the same time. More than the organization, however, the conversations I have had with the resident artists have been both inspiring and sobering, and have given me food for thought for my future. I am also certainly making progress on my learning objective to improve my Spanish. Every day I am in Mexico I learn more and more Spanish, and it is very exciting for me to track my advancement. Finally, I am also making good progress on my goal of understanding art better. Every day I go to see art or hear a lecture, and every day my conception of what art is expands and my critical eye sharpens. The overarching skill I have been learning through the pursuit of my learning objectives is how to think on my feet: how to trust my intuition, use the resources available and respond to things as they actually are, not as I think they should be. This, I think, is an invaluable skill.

So far, what I have enjoyed most about my experience in Mexico is the diversity of my experience (which seems to be the theme of this post). Every day I meet engaging people of different backgrounds than mine, or I go to a place I never knew existed, or I eat something new and foreign to me. I admit here for everyone to know that I did in fact eat fried grasshoppers. I don't know if I would do it again, but they weren't too bad.

I'm very much looking forward to whatever has yet to come in Mexico.

Till next time, I'll just be hanging out with these cacti.